

WHAT I CLAIM IS:

1. An electronic apparatus comprising:

a portable unit having a battery pack and charge terminals, the charge terminals are electrically coupled to the battery pack; and

a base unit comprising:

a voltage status control circuit for detecting and determining a voltage level of a power supply of the base unit, and

a cradle disposed within the base unit, the cradle is configured to receive the portable unit and has electrical contacts positioned for electrical coupling with the charge terminals of the portable unit when the portable unit is disposed within the cradle, wherein the base unit operates using power received from the battery pack of the portable unit when the voltage level of the base unit power supply is below a predetermined level.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the base unit and the portable unit are associated with a cordless telephone system, wherein the base unit is configured to place and receive telephone calls using the power received from the battery pack of the portable unit.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the battery pack of the portable unit is a rechargeable battery pack.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the battery pack of the portable unit can be recharged by the external source of power when the portable unit is placed in the cradle of the base unit.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a second portable unit configured to communicate with the base unit, wherein the second portable unit comprises a battery pack and can be used to place and receive telephone calls via the base unit when the base unit uses the power received from the battery pack of a first portable unit.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the base unit operates using power supplied from the battery pack of the second portable unit when an external source of power to the base unit fails.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the base unit further comprises:
a portable unit charging circuit responsive to an output of the voltage status control circuit to provide electrical energy to the electrical contacts when the voltage level exceeds the predetermined level; and
a power control circuit responsive to an output of the voltage status control circuit to couple the electrical contacts to an input of a voltage regulator circuit when the voltage level falls below the predetermined level.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the power control circuit comprises an electronic switch configured to alternatively couple or decouple the voltage regulator circuit with the electrical contacts depending upon a state of the voltage status control circuit output.

9. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the battery pack of the second portable unit is recharged by the external source of power when the second portable unit is placed in the cradle of the base unit.
10. A method for powering a base unit of an electronic apparatus comprising:
 - detecting by the base unit that a power outage condition has occurred;
 - placing a portable unit of the electronic apparatus into a cradle of the base unit;
 - and
 - receiving power by the base unit from a battery pack of the portable unit.
11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
 - comparing a voltage level of an external power line to a predetermined voltage level; and
 - receiving power by the base unit from the battery pack of the portable unit when the voltage level of the external power line has fallen below the predetermined voltage level.
12. The method of claim 10, wherein the base unit is configured to place and receive telephone calls.
13. The method of claim 10, wherein the base unit is configured to place and receive telephone calls using the power received from the battery pack of the portable unit.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the electronic apparatus includes a second portable unit, wherein the second portable unit is configured to place and receive telephone calls via the base unit when the base unit is powered by the battery pack of the first portable unit.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein the battery pack of the portable unit is a rechargeable battery pack.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the battery pack of the portable unit can be recharged by the external source of power when the portable unit is placed in the cradle of the base unit.

17. A cordless telephone system for continued operation of a base unit during a power outage condition, the system comprising:

 a first cordless telephone portable unit, including a rechargeable battery pack, and charge terminals that are electrically coupled to the rechargeable battery pack;

 a base unit capable of communicating with the first cordless portable unit to place and receive telephone calls, the base unit comprising:

 a cradle that is configured to receive the first cordless portable unit, the cradle comprising electrical contacts for electrical coupling with the portable unit charge terminals when the portable unit is disposed within the cradle;

 a power supply for receiving electrical power from an external power source;

a line status control circuit coupled to the base unit power supply which outputs a signal indicative of whether the voltage present on the power line exceeds a predefined level;

a portable unit charging circuit responsive to an output of the line status control circuit to provide electrical energy to the electrical contacts when the voltage present on the power line exceeds a predefined level; and

a power control circuit responsive to an output of the line status control circuit to couple the electrical contacts to an input of a voltage regulator circuit when the voltage present on the power line falls below a predefined level;

wherein the base unit operates using power supplied by the first portable unit rechargeable battery pack when the external source of power to the power line fails.

18. The system of claim 17, further comprising a second portable unit capable of communicating with the base unit, wherein the second portable unit can be used to place and receive telephone calls via the base unit when the external source of power to the power line fails.

19. The system of claim 17, wherein the first portable unit further comprises a speakerphone, whereby the first portable unit can be used to place and receive telephone calls via the base unit using the speakerphone when the supply of power to the power line fails.

20. The system of claim 17, wherein the base unit further comprises a speakerphone, wherein the base unit speakerphone can be used to place and receive telephone calls when the supply of power to the power line fails.
21. The system of claim 17, wherein the voltage regulator circuit having at least one input for receipt of electrical power and having at least one output providing regulated power to circuitry within the base unit.
22. The system of claim 21, wherein the power control circuit comprises an electronic switch configured to alternatively couple or decouple the voltage regulator circuit with the electrical contacts depending upon the state of the line status control circuit output.